

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planning

### What prior preparation is needed?

It takes 9-12 months to prepare the service. Ideally, children looking to celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah would have been attending Lamdeinu (the religious, Hebrew, History and cultural education school of our synagogue), Cheder, or another such program providing them with exposure to Judaism from an early age. The year immediately prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is intended to build on existing religious knowledge; the child should have been attending religious school for at least a year before embarking on the final year's preparation. Therefore, the period of preparation becomes essentially a minimum of two years.

### A step by step action plan:

1 Initial inquiry. By your child's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, if you have not yet been contacted, you should seek the person responsible for discussing the arrangements and finding mentors. This person will want to talk to you and the child to find out what will work best for everyone, both spiritually and geographically. The mentors do not in general charge for teaching, but you should discuss this with them at the outset.

For an adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah, please approach the person responsible for finding mentors at least a year prior to the desired date, depending on your level of previous knowledge and confidence.

2 Learning Agreement. At the outset we ask you and the child to read the learning agreement. It describes in more detail what we expect of the student, and how we expect you to help and support them. Please note that it is especially important to bring them to services when Lamdeinu is not in session due to half term or school holidays so that they become completely familiar with the standard liturgy.

3 Fixing the date. Once your child has been matched with a mentor and assessed, you need to discuss with the child's mentor when they might be ready to have the service, and then find a date around that time when the synagogue doesn't already have an event in the diary, and preferably not to fall on a Shabbat that is adjacent to another Bar/Bat Mitzvah. When you have a preferred date, you should:

1. Agree with the **Rabbi**.
2. Check for conflicts and enter into the Shul's diary/calendar.
3. Notify the person in charge of the Service Leaders Rota.
4. Sign up online for **Kiddush Rota**.

4 Guests. You are of course free to invite anyone you wish to the service. But please remember it is first and foremost an event for the whole community, so that other members may well come to celebrate, even though you haven't invited them (in reality, there is generally

an open invitation to the whole community). You need to take that into account when you think about numbers, since the Shul has a maximum capacity of approximately 100. On a few occasions the numbers have dictated holding the service somewhere else, but we generally discourage it for exactly the same reason: it's a community event so it feels best to hold it in the community's home. It will be up to you to make sure there are enough chairs put out. Do ask members of the community to help.

a) Include an announcement on the Wednesday Update email via the secretary, starting about a month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

5 Service preparation. At some stage a few weeks before the service you may want to talk to your child and his/her teacher about who does what in the service, whether the parents want to be involved, opening the curtains, parading the scroll, etc. If you are in any doubt, please check what non-Jews are permitted to do.

6 Wardening. The community will provide a warden to let people in, help them find seats, provide them with books etc. If possible it is also helpful to have someone at the door who knows your family and friends and who will be able to greet them and make them feel welcomed.

7 Kiddush. It is usual for you to provide food for the kiddush at the end of the service. You may want to pay an outside caterer to do this, or prefer to cater for it yourself. Again, if you need some help please ask – there are lots of members willing to join in. Clearing up afterwards is your responsibility. Again, you will usually be able to get members to help; the person paid to clean the synagogue may be free and willing to come in for a fee.